

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 1 April 2025

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Asvachin, Foale, Vizard, Williams, R and Wood

Also Present:

Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader);

Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader); and

Councillor M. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader)

Also present:

Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Strategic Director for People and Communities, Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Head of Service - Digital and Data, Head of Service - Customers and Communities and Democratic Services Manager.

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025, were taken as read, approved, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

32

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

No questions from members of the public were received.

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CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised Members of a recent hospital visit and expressed his gratitude to the NHS and commending the efficiency of the service provided.

34

REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Executive received the report on the Council's risk management progress and presented the revised Corporate Risk Register which was linked to the Council's Strategic Priorities. The Audit and Governance Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 19 March 2025, where it has been suggested to include a direction of travel indicator for risk scores, which would be incorporated in the next update.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and questions:

- the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding for the Riverside had been approved, resulting in a £3.6 million grant award from the Department of Energy, Security and Net Zero. The funding would contribute significantly to decarbonising public sector facilities and the Council's previous prudent decision making was highlighted;
- a new Head of Service for HR had been appointed, and the HR improvement plan was now underway; and

- the register required an amendment to ensure that the Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture & Tourism was listed for the relevant risks associated with that portfolio.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

- the suggestion from the Audit and Governance Committee, highlighted the benefit in indicating text amendments in the document to help members track where changes had been made between meetings.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Council's Corporate Risk Register be approved and that any necessary actions to help mitigate the risks for which it is responsible for be proposed to Council.

35

UPDATE ON THE DIGITAL CUSTOMER STRATEGY

The Executive received the report on the update and progress to date of the Digital Customer Strategy. The strategy was vital for delivering Member aspirations for customer-focused services, emphasising the importance of a culture of excellent customer and digital service, digital equality, and efficient processes.

Members received a presentation (appended to the minutes), and particular points discussed included:

- the Digital Customer Strategy (DCS) was adopted in December 2023, and focussed on user experience, customer-focused services, digital equality, and efficient processes;
- pre-adoption work included providing a gateway for non-standard service requests, improvements to the 'contact us' form on the council website, the rollout of Microsoft 365, reduction of mailbox sizes, and audits on digital equality and data use;
- there were 10 DCS goals which included outcomes and priority actions;
- the formation of dedicated teams within the People and Community Directorate, with additional staff recruited in Spring 2025;
- the Council adopted the Strata Business Plan 2024-2025 which supported delivery of the DCS in a number of ways including: the rollout of a new end-user computer, replacing Skype with Teams, a new customer relationship management platform, Enterprise Middleware Architecture for data integration, replacing the intranet and document management systems with SharePoint and bookings/notifications for customer updates and reminders;
- the MyExeter Platform was launched in January 2025 and provided joined-up channels for customer interactions. Garden waste services have been successfully piloted with waste management services to follow;
- over 2,000 users have signed up to MyExeter providing positive feedback on the seamless user experience, and plans are under development to include a wide range of other services;
- having central customer records allows officers to access personalised information, be able track customer interactions and make improvements in resolving enquiries;
- all staff moved from Skype to Teams telephony in February 2025;
- a new CX One Contact Centre Platform was procured in December 2024 and was scheduled to go live in Exeter in Spring 2025;

- the CX One Contact Centre will allow better integration and communication channels, with AI virtual assistants also automating back-office processes.
- a new Customer Charter was scheduled for 2025 and both customer and Councillor involvement will take place to craft the charter and set standards for high-quality customer experiences;
- having secure data measures was a priority for the Council and would involve regular audits completion of the cyber assessment framework, and rollout of cybersecurity training; and
- the Council had made a significant capital investment to enable the delivery of the Digital Customer Strategy.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and questions:

- would there be an App developed for residents to improve access to services?
- mailbox sizes were affecting Councillors' ability to manage casework;
- how would digital equality be put into practice?
- had mobile phone access been given more priority due to the likelihood of more residents having one and had the system been designed around this?
- there were some concerns about the phasing out of the global desktop for Members;
- Member training for cybersecurity would be necessary going forward;
- the update report and work undertaken to date was commended; and
- there was a need to address unique identifiers and links between users who lived in the same location with different subscriptions.

The Leader requested that a briefing session be arranged for Members to provide them information on the digital strategy and mailbox management.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

- was the system compatible with neighbouring councils, notably for future planning with the Councils plans for Local Government Review;
- was there any system vulnerability and suitable backup in place?
- how would digitally excluded residents be supported?
- how were benchmarking and quality standards being addressed for the website, including the use of plain English?
- would there be an opportunity to include translation services for residents?
- how would chatbots be assessed to ensure they worked efficiently, given the allocated budget of £17,000?
- reassurance was sought on the prevention of sharing personal data for residents in an HMO; and
- there were residents who were potentially digitally excluded and required human contact for service delivery.

In response to questions and points raised by Members, the Strategic Director for People and Communities, the Head of Service for Digital and Data and the Head of Service - Customers and Communities advised that: -

- there were financial implications for data storage, notably for mailbox sizes as the Council moved to cloud-based systems. There is a legal duty to only store for the minimum amount of time necessary and whilst it is initially difficult it is important for officers and Members alike to manage their inboxes within the approved size limits.

- the rationale for this is set out in the data strategy which had been developed to improve data quality, governance, and rules for data retention. A programme to educate staff and Members on data management will be provided as part of the strategy implementation;
- the rollout of SharePoint and a data warehouse would also support the Council in ensuring compliance with data standards;
- the transition from the global desktop to new end-user computing systems, involved extensive testing and planning, with a focus on priority services and customer-facing staff;
- the global desktop was outdated and with several vulnerabilities, requiring a move to more secure and efficient technology;
- there were challenges in integrating council devices and systems and engagement with Strata and other councils to resolve issues was ongoing;
- digital equality was a priority, and efforts would be made to make staff available to focus on supporting those needing one-to-one contact;
- Exeter was noted as being a digitally evolved city, but there were still ongoing efforts to address digital exclusion through service transformation and consultations, and the engagement strategy consultation would also look at addressing these issues on an on-going basis;
- the underlying technology would enable all three authorities to deliver on their digital ambitions despite differing transformation strategies. The technology and move to a cloud-based system provided a foundation for future service integration for any potential future authority;
- there was a challenge for unique identifiers in households, particularly with mobile devices, and the importance of ensuring proper security in system design was a priority being worked on;
- the effectiveness of chatbots was dependant on the quality of the core data and learning from other Councils, work was being undertaken to improve data quality before any chatbot implementation;
- there would also be a focus on ensuring chatbots did not block access to services to ensure human support was available as needed; research had shown that when a chatbot was not resolving a customer enquiry, a swift transfer to an alternative channel was the best customer outcome;
- the Strata Business Plan 2025-26 included the development of an App, to improve communications with residents, providing updates on council services, and included waste management;
- the importance of holding briefings for Members was highlighted and the communications team was providing support;
- a Digital Service Officer was responsible for ensuring website content was in plain English and ensuring common standards across all services;
- the website had translation services for all users and the team was working on chatbot integration to address missing elements on the website;
- although the Council website scored well on independent assessments, there were plans to simplify navigation further;
- the Council planned to engage in more benchmarking activities with other authorities to help improve standards;
- over the past 18 months, a lot of work had been undertaken to align services, with a focus on high demand areas, notably council tax, and housing information. It was intended to integrate these into a single portal by the end of the year; and
- although the team had been cautious in promoting the changes to focus on quality, plans were in place to engage Members in April 2025 to seek feedback and support in communication.

The Leader thanked the Strategic Director for People and Communities, the Head of Service for Digital and Data and the Head of Service - Customers and Communities for the detailed presentation and work undertaken.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Executive noted the report.

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DATA STRATEGY

The Executive received the report which outlined the Council's approach to using data to achieve its strategic goals and was intended to align with the adopted Digital Customer Strategy and the revised draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028.

Reference was made to the importance of the data strategy for data security, appropriate use and that efforts had been made to ensure it was understandable and clear.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and questions:

- interest was expressed in how data collection could streamline services and manage issues such as fly-tipping;
- were Councillors responsible for their own data control and protection? and
- the extent of efforts in meeting the needs of all customers was commended.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

- would public databases be updated, notably for tree protection orders and heritage assets, which had not been updated in many years;
- the report advised that there would be no environmental impacts, but data servers would create carbon issues, which needed to be addressed;
- was the budget for the strategy sufficient?
- a query was raised on a potential typo in the report appendix; and
- did the strategy adhere to any imposed template by central government or other public document?

In response to questions and points raised by Members, the Strategic Director for People and Communities advised that:

- there was a challenge in making data publicly available;
- there was a focus on improving the quality of information on the website,
- there were further difficulties in recruiting individuals with digital skills to undertake the work due to competition with the private sector. However, partnership work with other councils and Strata was on going on project-by-project basis;
- Strat costs the council around £2 million revenue a year which is a sufficient budget, and the partnership arrangement provides economies of scale, aiding a timely delivery;
- Exeter's initial focus was on infrastructure before making changes to front line services: partner councils have taken other approaches and whilst collaboration had been effective discussions were being held with Strata on potential changes in the approach to increase the pace of delivery on some projects.;

- the carbon impact assessment was an issue which had been discussed with Strat Board a, who have committed to further work with all three local authorities to assess carbon impacts, which had previously been a challenge to assess.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and City Centre, confirmed that Councillors were the data controllers and suggested that Members should receive a briefing on the subject.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Data Strategy as set out in Appendix A of the report presented at the meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.40 pm)

Chair

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 15 April 2025.

Digital Customer Strategy Update Report – March 2025

Introduction

- Adoption of Digital Customer Strategy
 - Implemented by the council in December 2023
 - Aims to prioritise customer needs
- Goals of the Strategy
 - Improve user experience
 - Guide service development and delivery
- Importance of the Strategy
 - Focus on customer-focused services
 - Emphasis on excellent customer and digital service
 - Promote digital equality

Pre-Adoption Work

- Gateway for Non-Standard Service Requests
 - Agreement process for non-standard service requests
 - Managed by Strata IT Service Solutions
- BYOD Process Implementation
 - Developed and rolled out to testers
 - Implemented in SMB and OMB
- Contact Us Form Improvements
 - Enhanced form on ECC website
 - Customers can select from common enquiries
- Pre-Digital Customer Strategy Work
 - Microsoft 365 rollout to all staff

Ten Goals for the Digital Customer Strategy

- Goals and Outcomes
 - Strategy includes ten goals
 - Covers all elements of digital customer service
 - Detailed outcomes for each goal
 - Priority actions specified for each goal
 - Refer to Appendix A for more details



Creation of Dedicated Teams

Stephen Clayton

Head of Service,
Customer and
Communities

Andrew Hopkins

Head of Service,
Digital and Data

- Formation of New Teams
 - Customer and Communities team
 - Digital and Data team
- Recruitment Timeline
 - New Heads of Service recruited in November 2024
 - Additional staff recruited in Spring 2025
- Key Positions
 - Consultation and Engagement Manager
 - Customer Experience Manager
 - Data Analyst
- Collaboration with Strata
 - IT service solutions and transformation company

Adoption of Strata Business Plan and Enablers

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we are
your
transformation
partner

This is the
Strata
business plan
for 2024/25

Version 1.8
Date issued: 20 December 2023

1: New End User Computing Model

- Transforming user experience
- Phasing out Global desktops

2: Contact Centre and Telephony

- Replacing Skype with Teams Telephony

3: Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

- State of the art platform for all customer contact

4: Enterprise Middleware Architecture (EMA)

- Data warehouse from which we will get a single view of the customer

5: SharePoint

- Replacement for the intranet and document management system

6: Bookings

- Provides the ability to book appointments and playing pitches

7: Notifications

- Provides updates and reminder to customers for example missed bin

8: Website Content and Chatbot

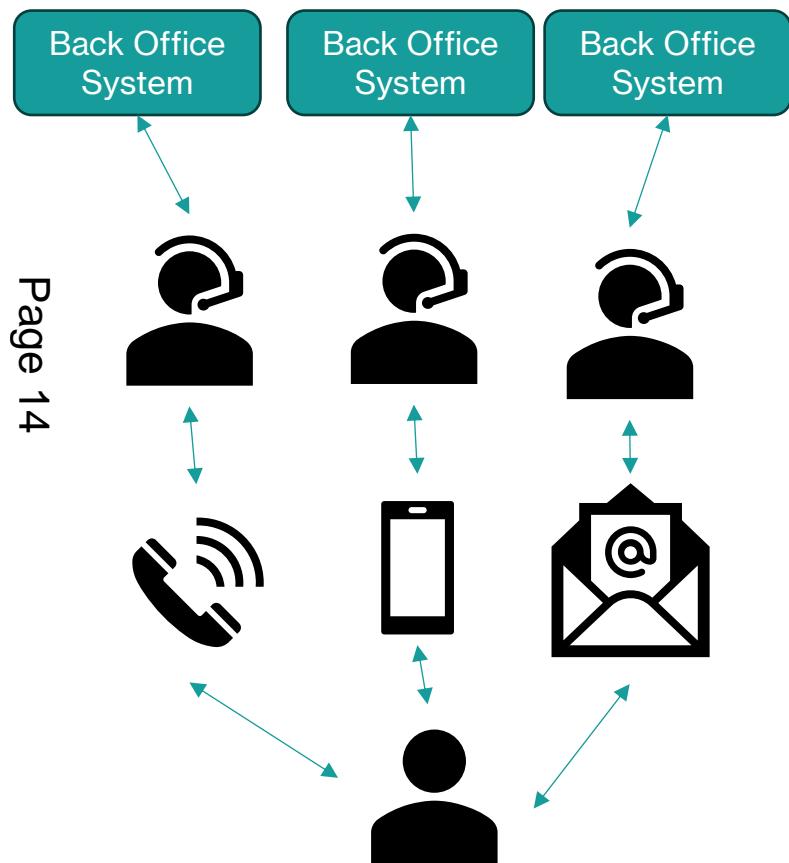
- Enable more online self-service and resolution at first point of contact

Joined-Up Channels

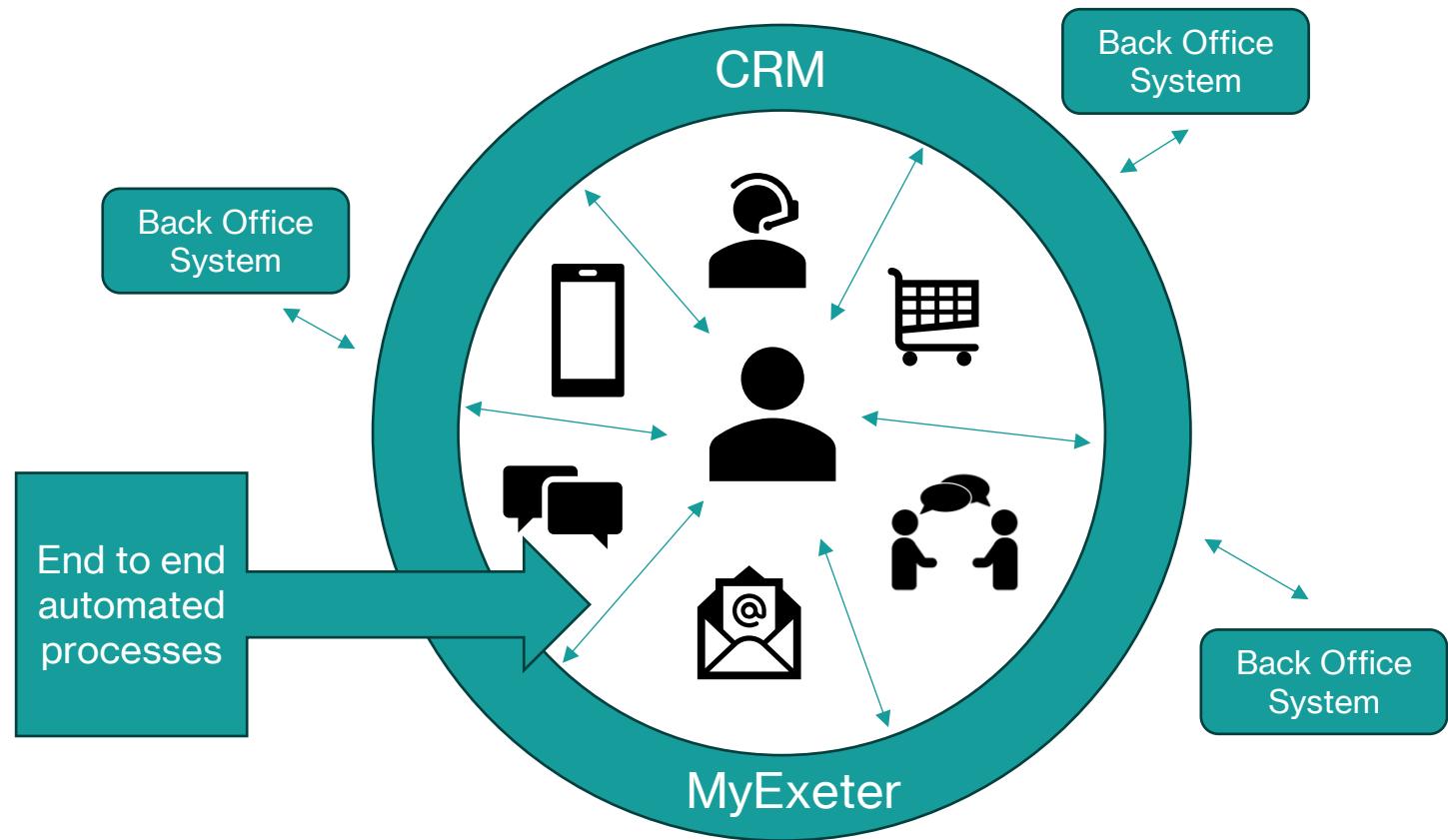
- Importance of Joined-Up Channels
 - Enhances customer interactions
 - Provides a single platform for multiple services
- MyExeter Platform
 - Significant step towards joined-up channels
 - Plans to integrate additional services
 - Chosen processes based on usage data and quick wins
- Garden Waste Process
 - First process added to MyExeter
 - Next processes from Waste Management service
- Quick Wins
- Communications Plan

A Seamless Customer Experience

Fragmented Customer Experience



Joined Up Customer Experience



Launch of MyExeter

Log in to MyExeter

If you have already created a MyExeter account, you can log in now.

Email address *

Password *

Sign in >

[Forgot your password?](#)

See our [privacy notices](#) for details on how we manage personal information.

Register for MyExeter

MyExeter is a new customer account where you can:

- Sign up to our garden waste collections service
- Access your account in our Tenant Portal (for council tenants)

Registering is quick and easy, and as an account holder you'll be able to log in at any time of day that suits you. We've introduced MyExeter as part of improvements we are making to our online services. New services will be added frequently and you will be able to track the progress of your requests.

Register >

- Introduction of MyExeter
 - New digital front door for the council
 - Went live in January 2025
- Initial Service
 - Garden Waste subscription service
- User Experience
 - Seamless and user-friendly
 - Positive initial feedback
- Future Plans
 - Dedicated communications plan for sign-up
 - Move from Digital and Data to Customer Support business as usual
 - Expansion of services in 2025

A Seamless Agent Experience

Mr David Sercombe
56, Newton Abbot, TQ12, United Kingdom,  Self Account Created
No D.O.B. given
07816...@gmail.com

[+ Raise Case](#)

Summary	Service Overview
Summary	
Details	
Cross References	0
Tasks Cases	0 11
Relationships	0
Notes	1 0
Messaging	0
Service Summary	

Waste Summary

What collections does my property have?
Garden (240L)
Recycling (Box Black)
Recycling (Box Green)
Recycling (Food Basket)
Recycling (Sacks Paper)
Refuse (180L)

Why was my bin missed?
No missed bin collection events recorded

Do I have a Garden Waste subscription?
Yes, you have a subscription which renews on 31 August 2025 (Permit printed on: 07 August 2024)

When is my Garden Waste collection?
Your collection is every other Monday

Am I registered for assisted waste collections?
No, you are currently not registered for assisted waste.

When are my next bin collections?
31 March 2025 - Refuse, Recycling
07 April 2025 - Garden, Recycling

Have I any Bulky Waste collections?
No, you do not have any bulky waste collections due

Customer Contact in One Place

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Mr David Sercombe
56, Newton Abbot, TQ12, United Kingdom

Self Account Created
No D.O.B. given
07816
@gmail.com

[+ Raise Case](#)

Summary 

Details

Cross References 0

Tasks | Cases 0 | 11

Relationships 0

Notes 1 | 0

Messaging 0

Service Summary

Latest 3 cases

Search

Reference	Type	Current Stage	Status	Created	Created by	Completed by
FS-Case-609410662	Miscellaneous Enquiry (Environmental Health)	N/A	Closed	26/04/2024 13:06:22	@gmail.com	
FS-Case-593788413	Miscellaneous Enquiry (Environmental Health)	N/A	Closed	08/03/2024 13:18:49	@gmail.com	
FS-Case-586363409	Miscellaneous Enquiry (Planning and building control)	N/A	Closed	13/02/2024 09:58:07	@gmail.com	

Showing 1 to 3 of 3 entries

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

[Update Details](#) [Change Address](#) [Caution](#) [Alerts](#)

Better Customer Data

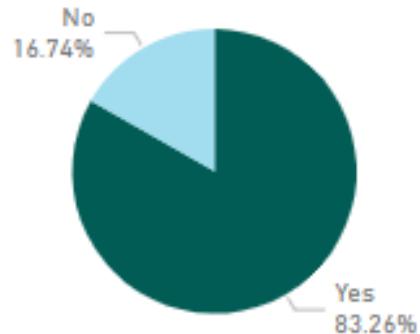
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Enquiries by type

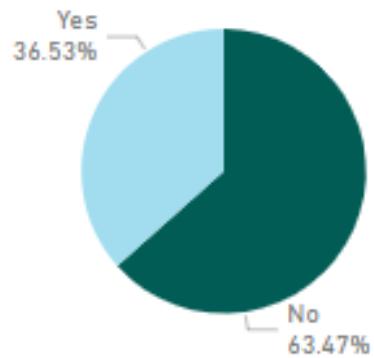
Function/activity/transaction

Function/activity/transaction	Enquiries
Council Tax	9475
Waste Management	2912
Housing Benefit	2353
Housing	2036
Parking	66
Information Management	41
Council Property	24
Other Services	8
Environmental Health	2
Leisure and Culture	2
Planning and Building Control	1
Total	16920

Resolved on first contact?

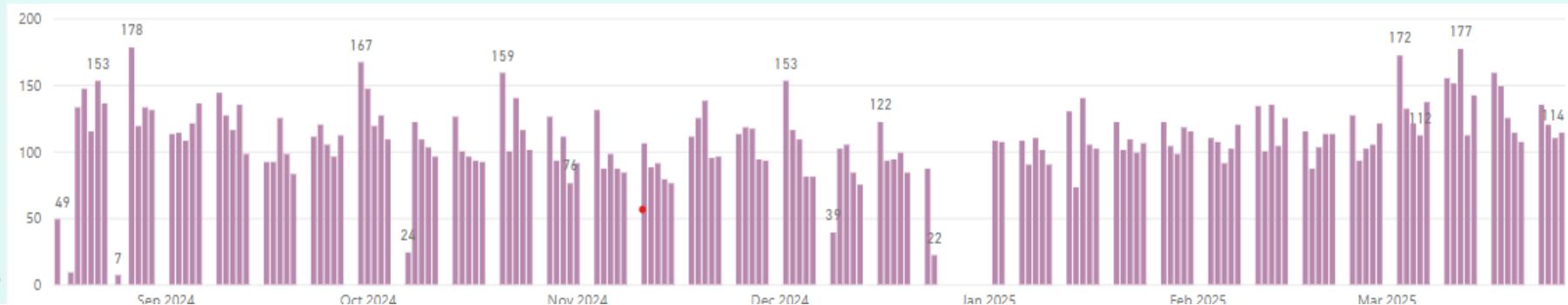


Was contact avoidable?



Number of enquiries

Number of enquiries by date



Next Steps in improving Customer Experience

- Develop ways of proactively notifying customers of service issues, such as missed bins, before they contact us
- Improve engagement with customers around service design and barriers to accessing service
- Moving towards a single online offer that links engagement activities, MyExeter and Newsletters and Bulletins subscriptions, along with personalised information relevant to that customer
- Adding more services to both MyExeter and the internal Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system
- Testing new Chatbot in the contact centre
- Linking the new telephony system so that customer information pops up based on their phone number/email address etc.

Telephony and Contact Centre Solution



- Review and Rationalisation of Contact Information
 - Ensured simple and easy customer journey
 - Promoted One Front Door approach
- Transition to Teams Telephony
 - All staff transferred from Skype to Teams by February 2025
 - Customer Services now control administration
 - Routing, in-call messaging, and opening hours managed by Customer Services
- Implementation of New Contact Centre Platform
 - Nice CX One procured in December 2024
 - Scheduled to go live in Exeter in Spring 2025
 - Phased implementation delivering measurable benefits
 - Single omnichannel solution (chat, telephony, online)

Development of a Customer Charter

- Customer Charter Development
 - Involvement of Councillors and customers
 - Scheduled for 2025
- Standards for Customer Experience
 - Consistent service quality
 - High-quality customer experience
- Data for Improvement
 - Part of Corporate Performance Framework
 - Applicable across all service areas
- Fostering Excellent Customer Service
 - Broader effort within the council

Efficient Processes

- Projects in Key Service Areas
 - City Development, Parks and Open Spaces, Waste Management
 - Reviewing processes and website content
 - Exploring digitalisation for service enhancement
- **City Development Transformation Project**
 - Delivering outcomes in the Digital Customer Strategy and become an exemplar of excellent digital and customer delivery
 - Collaborating with national initiatives and integrating best practices
 - Embed the Uniform (IDOX) system within the service
- **Rapid Impact Team Initiatives**
 - Project Feedback and Action Plans

Secure Data



- Secure Data Measures
 - Top priority for the council
 - Implemented to safeguard data and protect privacy
 - Regular audits and assessments by Strata
- Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)
 - Tool for achieving and demonstrating cyber resilience
 - Consists of objectives, principles, outcomes, and indicators
 - Assesses management of cyber risks to essential functions
- Key Aspects of CAF
 - Decision Making: Led and supported at senior level
 - Staff Training and Phishing Test

Customer-Centric Design

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- Importance of Customer-Centric Design
 - Designing services with the customer in mind
 - Actively seeking customer feedback
- Website Improvements
 - Enhancing user experience
 - Gathering customer advice
- Consultation and Engagement Manager
 - Discussing implementation strategies
 - Integrating feedback into business practices
- Customer Charter Development
 - Key initiative for meeting customer expectations
 - Ensuring customer satisfaction and exceeding expectations

Continuous Improvement

- Commitment to Continuous Improvement
 - Regular reviews and assessments
 - Identification of areas for improvement
 - Implementation of necessary changes
- Transparency and Accountability
 - Progress report on the strategy
 - Example of council's commitment



Capital Investment

- 2023/24 Capital Allocation
 - £288,989 allocated to support the emerging Customer Digital Strategy
- 2024/25 Capital Investment
 - £1,139,340 invested to support the delivery of Enablers within Strata Business Plan
- 2025/26 Approved Capital Investment
 - £452,758 additional capital investment approved



Conclusion

- Dedicated capital funding
 - Enabled the Digital Customer Strategy
- New bespoke teams
 - Customer and Communities team
 - Digital and Data team
- Launch of MyExeter
 - Enhances digital engagement
- Digital skills development
 - Promote digital skills
- Procurement of new state of the art telephony and contact centre solution
- Digital transformation
- Continuous improvement

Any Questions?